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Housekeepers' Chats

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Shining Up the Household Metals"

Bulletin Available: Housecleaning Made Easier

Every now and then we have odd-job day at our house. When the other work is pretty well caught up and the regular household duties seem to be running along on schedule time, I take a morning off and do the extras. Maybe I polish the silver and shine up the copper and brass bowls that hold my winter bouquets. Maybe I do a little mending that has been waiting a week or two. Maybe I paste a few clippings in my scrap book or fix up the files in my desk.

One of these celebrations occurred yesterday, and was inspired by a visit from Cousin Mattie. Cousin Mattie is the greatest talker in our family.-- and that is saying a good deal. I am told that she was a chatter-box when she was a child and that her marriage was successful chiefly because she married a man who had never been heard to say more than yes or no. Her conversational ability, as far as I can see, has not grown weak with the years. Far from it. When she drops in for a chat, it is a sure bet that it will last for hours. However, her visits do have their advantages. The chief one is that they keep all the relatives informed about each other. Cousin Mattie carries the news from house to house and long ago was nicknamed "The family newspaper."

Right after lunch yesterday when I went out to sweep the snow off the porch, I found Cousin Mattie just coming up the walk.

"Such a cozy day for a good, old-fashioned chat," she called to me. "So I told Elisha to bring me right in to see you. I decided that there was no one I would rather chat with today than you, Aunt Sammy."

As soon as we were seated in the living room, however, Cousin Mattie began to draw her shawl about her.

"I wonder if Ebenezer is keeping your furnace up as he should, Aunt Sammy. It seems draughty in here and I do hate a draught. Why don't we go out to your pleasant kitchen and visit? I believe I like to chat in the kitchen better than anywhere else. Maybe that's for old time's sake."

You remember that when we were children the kitchen was almost the only warm spot in the house all winter. All the neighbors sat there when they came in to visit."

So we went to the kitchen and when Cousin Mattie was comfortably settled I said to myself, "How about polishing up the silver while she chats? Then it will be all ready for New Year's dinner." I asked Cousin Mattie if she minded if I did a few little odd-jobs while we talked.

"Not at all, my dear. I enjoy seeing other people busy. Did I tell you the latest about Sara's twins? A dreadfully difficult pair to manage. Poor dear Sara has her trials with them. Now they've made up their minds that they don't want to be dressed just alike and I do believe Sara is going to let them have their way."

I suggested that perhaps it was a good idea not to force children to be twins just because they were born that way, and that, for my part, I thought it was nice that they were taking an interest in their clothes. Then I brought out my silver--badly tarnished it was, too--and my big aluminum dishpan, which I always try to keep shiny just for this purpose. Some people use the same method that I do for cleaning silver, but use an enamelware or agate kettle and strips of aluminum. Some aluminum or zinc is necessary to do the trick, But I'm getting ahead of my story.

The aluminum pan I filled about half full of water, measuring it quart by quart as I went. Then I put in one teaspoon of soda--either washing soda or baking soda will do-- and one teaspoon of salt for each quart of water used. The pan I set on the stove and when the water had reached the boiling point, I carefully laid in the silver.

Cousin Mattie actually stopped talking for a second and then exclaimed, "Well, I never! That looks like a fine way to ruin silver, and not to clean it."

I assured her that it might harm the silver if it was left in too long, but that I only allowed it to stand in the solution a very short time, just long enough to remove the tarnish. After that, I lifted it out, polished it a little, washed it and dried it on a soft, clean cloth.

From the shelf over the table I brought down that helpful little booklet, called "Housecleaning Made Easier", written by my home economics friends. I turned to page 11 and showed Cousin Mattie the directions for cleaning silver, which included the method by electrolysis, which I had just used. A quick and easy method, especially for the busy housewife who has many pieces to clean. Cousin Mattie was properly impressed.

"Housekeepers certainly have it easy in these scientific days. Why, when I was a girl we never heard of such a thing as electrolysis. We used elbow grease and whiting paste and we made an all-day job of cleaning the family silver. I'd like to hear some more of what that books says. I'll pass the news along to the other relatives."

"Let me read you a few paragraphs, 'The tarnish on silver is silver sulphid. It is due to sulphur compounds in the air, where coal and gas are burned, also in many foods, in wool, in rubber, and in some bleached and dyed materials. This is the reason silversmiths avoid white cotton flannel for their cases for silver.

"Does it say anything about keeping camphor in the drawer with the silver? My mother always used to do that."

"'Dryness,' it says, 'prevents tarnishing somewhat, and so camphor, which absorbs moisture, is sometimes put into the silver drawer.' It also suggests that silver may be cleaned in anyone of three ways-- by the use of frictional agents, by boiling it in a strong alkaline solution, or by electrolysis. The frictional materials used are fine whiting, rouge, and commercial pastes and powders. The noncommercial powders are mixed to a paste with water, ammonia or alcohol, applied to the silver, allowed to dry and then brushed off with a soft cloth, chamois or a brush. The result is bright, lustrous silver.'"

Silver cleaned in the quicker ways--either in an alkaline solution or by electrolysis, does not have a high polish such as cleaning by friction gives. A little rubbing afterward, however, soon shines it up.

"Before you stop, Aunt Sammy, I'd like to hear about cleaning copper and brass. My andirons and copper kettle are both dingy. And I would like to know how you manage to keep your aluminum pans so bright."

The little book is my guide, again. For copper, brass and bronze, remove the tarnish by friction or dissolve it in weak acids. Rottenstone mixed with oil to a creamy consistency is often used. After applying it, polish with a soft cloth. If you want an even brighter luster, give a final rubbing with dry rottenstone or whiting. You can also use acid to clean. Buttermilk, warm vinegar, or a weak oxalic-acid solution will quickly dissolve the tarnish, but be sure to remove every trace of the acid or it will tarnish very quickly again. Washing the metal in water, drying it, and rubbing it with dry whiting is the best way to remove the acid. The whiting not only takes up moisture, but gives the metal a brighter luster than when acid alone is used.

As for aluminum, it is a metal that doesn't tarnish easily, except in the presence of alkalis. For this reason, it is a good idea never to use strong soap or scouring powders containing free alkali when you are cleaning it. Any discoloration may be removed by rubbing with whiting or very fine steel wool, or by dissolving with vinegar or other weak acids. Some special preparations for cleaning aluminum are on the market.

That's about enough on household metals now. There is plenty of other good advice in that little leaflet on housecleaning, but as Cousin Mattie finally decided, it's safer and easier to keep the book in convenient reach

1. The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the plane was the cold. It was a sharp contrast to the warm, humid air of the tropics. I shivered slightly, pulling my jacket closer. The ground below was a vast, flat expanse of white sand, stretching out to the horizon under a pale blue sky. In the distance, a line of low, rolling hills could be seen, their peaks softened by the haze. The silence was profound, broken only by the distant hum of a plane or the occasional cry of a bird.

2. As I walked along the beach, the sand felt like a soft carpet under my feet. The waves were gentle, lapping at the shore with a rhythmic, soothing sound. I looked out at the horizon, where the sea met the sky in a seamless blend of blue. The air was crisp and clean, a welcome change from the sticky heat of the city. I felt a sense of peace and solitude, a moment of quiet reflection in a world that often feels so busy and chaotic.

3. The sun was low in the sky, casting a warm, golden glow over the landscape. The colors of the sand, the sea, and the sky were all bathed in this soft light, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. I closed my eyes for a moment, savoring the warmth and the gentle breeze. The sound of the waves was like a lullaby, pulling me into a state of calm. I felt a deep connection to this place, a sense of belonging that I had never experienced before. It was as if I had found a hidden gem, a secret world that was just waiting for me to discover it.

4. I walked further down the beach, the sand still soft and warm. The waves were now a bit more turbulent, their white foam crashing against the shore. I looked back over my shoulder, watching the waves recede into the distance. The horizon was still there, a constant reminder of the vastness of the world. I felt a sense of awe and wonder, a realization that I was standing on the edge of something beautiful and mysterious. The air was still, the only sound the gentle rustle of the sand under my feet.

5. The sun had set, and the sky was a deep, dark blue. The stars were beginning to appear, their light twinkling in the vastness of the night. The sea was calm, its surface reflecting the starlight. I stood still, looking up at the sky, feeling a sense of awe and wonder. The world was so quiet, so still, that I could hear the sound of my own heart. It was a moment of pure magic, a moment that I would never forget.

6. The night was deep, the stars were bright, and the sea was calm. I walked back to the plane, the sand still soft and warm. The waves were now a bit more turbulent, their white foam crashing against the shore. I looked back over my shoulder, watching the waves recede into the distance. The horizon was still there, a constant reminder of the vastness of the world. I felt a sense of awe and wonder, a realization that I was standing on the edge of something beautiful and mysterious. The air was still, the only sound the gentle rustle of the sand under my feet.

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on the shelf than to try to keep all the information it contains in your head.

Tomorrow I'm going to talk on painless parties for the children. Isn't that a good subject? Uncle Ebenezer suggested the title. Then, as tomorrow is menu day, I'm planning to give you a menu for a buffet supper for either New Year's Eve or New Year's Night, whichever you please,

Lots of letters have been coming in lately. Several of my friends ask for ways of using left-over cream. Another one wants recipes for using sour milk. Shall we answer questions on Friday? All right.

Wednesday: "Painless Parties for the Youngest" and "A Buffet Supper Menu for New Year's Guests."

